

(De)Coloniality in Teacher Education: Reflections on Student Teachers' Mobility from the Global North to the Global South

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ABSTRACT

Emphasis on the need for Norwegian student teachers to conduct part of their teacher education programme abroad is increasing. Among the arguments for this emphasis is the idea that globally aware teachers have better intercultural competence that can facilitate sustainable development and more just education. Evidence to support these claims is contested. In this paper, we explore *how facilitators of student teachers' mobility between Norway and countries in the Global South reflect on student mobility as part of the (de)colonial project*. We apply decolonial frameworks (Mbembe, 2016; Mignolo, 2021) that interrogate the *colonial matrix of power* (CMP) (Quijano, 2000) to identify and challenge colonial relations and expectations. Findings are based on interviews from four facilitators from Tanzania and Zambia (Global South) and three teacher educators from Norway (Global North) who facilitate Norwegian student teachers' mobility. The findings show that student facilitators from the Global North had more freedom to shape mobility activities, including the freedom to choose partners, reproducing asymmetrical power relations exerted through mobility.

Keywords: *teacher education; Norway; student mobility; Global South; decoloniality*

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Background and introduction

This study explores the (de)colonial perspectives among facilitators of student teachers' mobility from Norway to Zambia and Tanzania. Both African countries were colonised by Britain, and they currently use both local languages and English as media for communication and instruction in their educational institutions. While Swahili is a collective local and national language in Tanzania, there are seven different local

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languages in Zambia. The local majority language in each Zambian province is officially used as the medium of communication from preschool to Grade Four, while English is used from Grade Five up to university level. In Tanzania, Swahili is used in public primary schools, while English is used mainly in private primary schools and from secondary school to university level. Like many other countries in Africa, in Zambia and Tanzania cultures and traditional practices from different ethnic groups and religions are fused with modern Western culture. This fusion is what Mazrui (1986) calls *Africa's triple heritage*, portraying: (1) the local and Indigenous heritage; (2) the heritage of European colonialism including Christianity; and (3) Arabic and the spread of Islam on the continent. Unlike many other countries on the continent, Tanzania and Zambia share a long history of political stability since attaining independence, a condition that has been favourable to a lengthy tradition of Norwegian development co-operation, including educational cooperation.

Since the first government white paper on internationalisation in higher education in Norway was published (St.meld. nr. 14 (2008–2009)), the national educational authorities have emphasised the importance of internationalisation and student mobility. While the first white paper in 2008 argued for student mobility from the Global South (the Quota Scheme¹) as part of a global responsibility to reach our common goals, the arguments in 2020 (Meld. St. 7 (2020–2021)) emphasised student mobility from Norway to enhance global awareness, motivation, work relevance and personal growth (Bergersen et al., 2022). This has forced the mobility programmes to be planned mainly based on the Norwegian education system and teacher education needs and premises.

Since the release of the 2008 white paper, many teacher education institutions in Norway have encouraged their students to undertake part of their teaching practicum abroad or carry out three months of study or fieldwork abroad. Helle (2015) discussed the rationale behind this emphasis among higher education institutions in Norway, and she found that academic and intercultural competence was more strongly emphasised than political and economic rationales. It is argued that exposing students to an international setting abroad can increase: (a) students' intercultural competence; (b) students' global awareness; and (c) the quality of the educational programme. Despite the evidence of student teachers' exchange contribution to their intercultural competence (Bergersen et al., 2022), there is also a danger of cementing colonial power relations in student mobility (Juul-Wiese & Adriansen, 2019), especially in the Nordic region.

¹ The Norwegian government provided scholarships for students from developing countries in the South and countries in Central- and Eastern-Europe and Central-Asia under the Quota Scheme. The main objective of the Quota Scheme was to contribute to capacity building through education that will benefit the home country of the students when they return. After 2016, the policy changed, and the objective of the scheme was directed towards promoting the internationalisation of Norwegian higher education.

Although coloniality is a global phenomenon, the Nordic region has an ambiguous relationship to the colonial concept given the historical ‘innocent’ narrative emphasised in these countries. In recent years, several scholars have raised discussions regarding the Nordic nations’ involvement in the pan-European imperial colonial project of the nineteenth century and how that has influenced the modern Nordic self-image and policies (Höglund & Burnett, 2019). This also includes domestic colonial supremacy, such as the Norwegian invasion of the Sápmi land through Norwegianisation policies and education (Nergård, 2022). Despite this knowledge, there is still minimal acknowledgement of the ways coloniality has and continues to shape Norwegian education, teacher education and internationalisation. In the past decade, some Norwegian scholars (Eriksen, 2021; Salinas, 2020) have emphasised the need for decolonial theoretical frameworks as analytical tools in the Norwegian education system. This is in parallel with the international decolonial scholars (Mbembe, 2016, 2022; Mignolo, 2021; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Quijano, 2000) call for the decolonialisation of knowledge and universities, and the need for critical and *pluriversalist* knowledge based on radical and new ways of thinking. This movement seeks to challenge and undo the legacy of colonialism and to assert the knowledge, agency and dignity of those who have been colonised.

Conceptual and theoretical frameworks

Our analysis of student teachers’ mobility is grounded in theories of decoloniality (Mbembe, 2022; Mignolo, 2021; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Quijano, 2000) and emancipatory pedagogy (Freire, 2000). Quijano and Ennis (2000) describe coloniality as a system of power that produces and reproduces racial and gender hierarchies at the global and local levels, which, together with capital, knowledge and culture, maintain a regime of Western domination and exploitation. In most African postcolonial states, the reification of Eurocentric knowledge, which promotes the superiority of Western knowledge, is still perpetuated by the educational systems that negate ideals of cross-cultural education and the role of indigenous knowledge in students’ school experiences (Shizha, 2006). As described by Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (2018, p. 137), this discourse has its roots in the invasion of the mental universe of the colonised world, where Europe was regarded as a place of knowers (teachers/civilisers) and Africa as a dwelling place for ignorant and primitive subhuman species; Europe was the originator of things and Africa was the imitator; and Europe was a source of science and rationality and Africa was a ‘Dark Continent’ engrossed in magic and superstition. These assumptions created a loss of epistemic legitimacy and reliance on epistemic dependency (p. 138), and facilitated the use of former colonialists’ languages, such as English, to universalise universities (Mbembe, 2016). Such practices override the rich local multilingual cultures and policies in education, including university education (Canagarajah, 2021), allowing

the *colonial matrix of power* (CMP) to be sustained. The CMP, as described by Quijano (2000, p. 256), is a system of power that represents the extension of Western domination through the four interrelated domains of *economy, authority/politics, gender/sexuality, and knowledge*. The CMP is often forged into educational concepts, such as modernity, humanity, development, and democratic ideologies in a neoliberal way in which the Western ways of knowing continue to occupy the master, superior and central positions.

Decoloniality seeks to make the CMP visible and advance distinct perspectives and positionalities that decentre Western rationality as the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis and thought. Such perspectives require what Maldonado-Torres (2016) refers to as *decolonial attitudes*, which involve relational ways of seeing the world, including the relationship between privilege and oppression. Relational ways of seeing involve challenging educators to think *with* and not simply *about* the people, and this is not a static condition, an individual attribute or a lineal point of arrival or enlightenment (Mignolo, 2011). Decolonial logic is, partly in line with Freire's (2000) theory of the pedagogy of the oppressed, which emphasize to think *with* the learners and not *for*, through true dialogue. As stated by Freire (2000), education is never neutral, and to free oneself and/or society from the ongoing effects of colonialism and the colonial legacy through education, we see the need to combine decolonial lenses with critical pedagogy.

Methodology

We applied a qualitative interview research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The participants were two male and two female educators from the Global South (Tanzania and Zambia), and one male and two female educators from the Global North (Norway). Most of the participants have more than 20 years of teaching experience and more than 10 years of experience with student mobility from Norway to Tanzania or Zambia. To contextualise our findings, we allied with Smith's (2021) recommendations for decolonial research and methodologies, where the focus must be more on the context in which research problems are contextualised and the implications of research for its participants and their communities than on techniques of selection of methods. We developed an interview guide with 13 semi-structured, open-ended questions about student mobility, touching on themes ranging from global equality, social justice and decolonialisation awareness to aspects participants considered as achievements and challenges. We were flexible and open to the contextual narratives, and the interviews lasted from 45 to 120 minutes. Three of the seven interviews were conducted in person and took place in the Global South, while the rest were conducted online using the Zoom digital platform. The digital interviews offered a relatively good alternative to the in-person interviews, given that we were familiar with the participants through our collaboration in relation to student mobility.

The participants from the Global South consisted of one head teacher, two lecturers from a teacher education college and one senior education officer, and we have hosted all of them in Norway either as project partners or as students. These relationships both enriched and challenged our dialogues. The enrichment came from familiarity with the context that the participants were talking about; thus, we could see mobility from different perspectives. This provided ‘*positional spaces*’ (Mullings, 1999, p. 340), areas in which the situated knowledge of both parties to the interview engender a level of trust and co-operation. The challenging part was the unequal power relations embedded in mobility partnerships, such as the North/Norwegian economic and epistemic dominancy, which (possibly) influenced the interview dynamic. In our analysis, we considered the ways we interpreted such positional spaces to understand the narratives from the participants and our positions and roles as representing perspectives from both the North and South. This reflected Mignolo’s (2011) concept of ‘*border thinking*’, that is, thinking from the outside and using alternative models.

All the participants from Norway were teacher educators working in universities. The interviews with participants from the Global North were conducted in Norwegian, the participants’ first language, while interviews with participants from the Global South were conducted in English, which was not the first language of the interviewers or the interviewees, but rather a common academic language used in all three countries.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed into text. After transcription, we divided the empirical data from the Global South and the Global North. The key initial coding factors to analyse were *colonial/decolonial positioning, success and challenging stories with student mobility, expressions of power and (white) privileges and social justice*. We then did a cross-cultural analysis in which we analysed all data, cross-checked, and discussed our interpretations (coding) of the participants’ stories. The anonymity of the participants was highly valued and contextualised quotes were reformulated in our presentation of the findings.

Andreotti et al. (2015) cautioned about doing decolonial research as a Western-oriented researcher, as it might feed on socialised desires to feel well, look good and be seen as doing something good. This can reinscribe unacknowledged structures of privilege embedded in coloniality. Our lived and professional experiences in Norway, Tanzania, and Zambia, with our different cultural backgrounds, put us in both comfortable and uncomfortable border thinking situations (Mignolo, 2011), forcing us to reflect on our reflexivity and explore our colonial thinking and practices with and against each other and in relation to our participants. We challenged each other’s interpretations of the data and were open to discussions about the epistemologies that have fed our understanding of (de)coloniality in the data. As discussed in our previous study (Bergersen & Massao, 2022), we are two female teacher educators with intersectional positions in the field based on our different cultural backgrounds (white Norwegian and black Tanzanian immigrant to Norway). We consider that openness about our subjective differences, providing space for epistemological

friction, contributed to strengthening the validity and reliability of our cross-cultural studies. This space can sometimes involve a sense of discomfort when we reflect on our own participation in such colonial attitudes (Maldonado-Torres, 2016) while implementing the educational policies we are a part of, such as student mobility.

Findings and discussion

In this section, we present our findings and discuss them along the way. Based on our research question, ‘How do teacher educators and facilitators of student teachers’ mobility between Norway and countries in the Global South reflect over student mobility as part of the (de)colonial project?’, we have grouped our findings into two major themes: (1) Positionality – findings that map participants’ paths, positions and roles; and (2) (De)coloniality – reflections challenging coloniality locally and globally. In the following section, we elaborate on these two themes.

Positionality – mapping educators’ paths, positions and roles as mobility facilitators

We start by presenting our participants’ *personal and educational backgrounds*, which have led them to become facilitators for Norwegian students in the Global South. We also asked about the *positions they occupy* and the *roles they play*. It was clear that personal networks, academic background and experience influenced their interest in and opportunities to facilitate student mobility between the North and the South. While in the Global North, academic achievements and roles such as teacher educators at the university play a key role in facilitating student mobility, our participants from the Global South described their way of facilitating Norwegian student mobility to be mainly based on their previous contacts with Norwegian partners through projects, long-term cooperation and/or as former students in Norway, as expressed below:

Ten years ago, I hired a Nordic colleague living in South Africa. And through him, a lot of students started coming into my office and saying they wanted to do internships in South Africa. In a way that is how we started up the mobility with Africa... But the network there was very person-based. When that person left, others took over and they started students’ mobility to another country. (Male 7, North)

The path to the facilitator role in Norway seems to be flexible while, at the same time, vulnerable because it depends on a few people’s interests. The selection of the partner country also depended on the North facilitator’s network in that country. This also implies the freedom and power to choose partner countries and institutions. This freedom was not the same for the participants from the Global South, given the economic constraints, and the facilitator role was considered as ‘privileged’, as expressed below:

I have been involved with Norwegian students because I did study in Norway. From the first time I saw Norwegian students at our school, I have been interested in interacting with them, but my opportunity to facilitate students' mobility came after my year in Norway. I am very happy that I was privileged to go to the other side of the world. (Female 3, South)

Another participant added:

I had the experience and privilege of working with colleagues from the North, Ministry of Education in Norway for many years. I think that was the beginning of everything and that is how I started working with Norwegian students. And I have done that for a long time. (Male 2, South)

As expressed by these participants, long-term cooperation with Norwegian institutions and educators gave them the opportunity to facilitate student mobility, and this was considered as a privilege. For other colleagues in the Global South, working with students from Norway was expected to lead to opportunities such as a trip to Norway, to study or conduct project activities that could benefit them economically, as expressed in the following quote:

For most people that [financial benefits] is a serious expectation. Finally, when people interact with students, we find that is not the case. Other expectations are that our friends coming from the North are well-off in terms of finances so you expect your hands will be well-oiled. [Laughter]. But of course, that is a misplaced expectation... That is why I have looked around to see who can continue this work after me and demystify the concept of the [economic] benefit coming from the North. (Male 1, South)

The above participant had worked for many years with one of the interviewers and could be open about the unspoken economic expectations related to facilitating student mobility. He understood these to be unrealistic and tried to 'demystify' them, especially in preparation for his successor. Both directly and indirectly speaking, aspects of economy, knowledge and cultural exposure are mentioned as benefits expected by the facilitators for Norwegian students. The economic expectations from the facilitators in the Global South convey asymmetrical economic relations between, for example, Norway, Tanzania, and Zambia. Although Norway is not among the former colonial powers it does, however, participate in hegemonic Western discourses and their universalistic modes of thought and practices that established and still perpetuate coloniality through economic and knowledge domains portraying domination (Mbembe, 2022; Quijano, 2000). These relations and expectations in our findings match with decolonial scholars' arguments, such as Mignolo (2021) and Mbembe (2016, 2022), who show how the Western political economy remains in place through mobility projects with the Global South. This reflects the CMP system as presented by Quijano (2000), as mobility run in a danger of representing the

extension of Western domination through (expected) economic and knowledge dominance. For instance, a trip to Norway is regarded as providing economic, educational and knowledge benefits, given Norway's superior political and economic position globally that also allows knowledge from Norway to be more desired. Related findings are found in the studies by Bergersen and Muleya (2019) and Bergersen and Massao (2022) where Zambian students expressed the desire for and valorisation of Norwegian knowledge in their research projects after a year in Norway.

Another aspect that arises is the role that different facilitators occupy and play. Student mobility projects appear to be somehow vulnerable, person-based and complex, mainly shaped and controlled by facilitators from the North. As expressed by our participants from the Global South, their paths to the facilitation role depend mainly on the interactions and relations they have with facilitators from the Global North. Although indirectly and humbly, the participants from the Global South expressed their role as marginal and they wished to have a more central role in the students' academic activities, such as lecturing and supervising the students more than they do today. They also wished to learn and contribute more to the whole mobility process by learning more about the learning outcomes resulting from mobility, as expressed by the following participants: '... where we are able to contribute more and we have the capacity, we can contribute as academics in a small way' (Male 1, South); 'I also would like to get information about the students' project, what they understood after interviewing me, what was the result and what they have learned' (Female 3, South).

We argue that acknowledging and sharing more academic responsibility with our partners in the Global South should be among the steps to decentre the current asymmetrical epistemic relations framed by Norwegian internationalisation programmes and facilitators. Academic supervision by colleagues in the Global South will enable Norwegian students and facilitators to think *with* and not *about* the others and create a space for plural and diverse perspectives (Mbembe, 2022; Naudé, 2019) and border thinking (Mignolo, 2011) that might increase their awareness of the need to facilitate epistemic justice in education and the teaching profession.

Facilitators from the Global South showed much appreciation in relation to how they learned from the Norwegian students. This expression partly revealed the subordinate position these facilitators occupy consciously or unconsciously in relation to the ways they express how much they learned from Norwegian students, as described here: 'We learn from each other so we can appreciate each other by asking questions and help each other to see what we don't see' (Male 2, South). Another facilitator added, 'We learned a lot from them. Sometimes they'll tell us "No, I thought this one could be done this way." So, we learned a lot of things from them and I'm sure they learned something from us. What we learned helped us to try to change and become equal' (Female 4, South).

The asymmetrical relation can be seen in the ways the facilitators from the Global South position themselves in the knowledge-sharing space, by emphasising how much they learned from the students and not how much Norwegian students learned

from them. As argued by Freire (2000) and Mignolo (2011), it is through relational ways of giving each other positions and challenging knowledge, power and oppression that education can be a venue for social justice, a process which can be utilised better in student mobility if the facilitators from the Global South are given more sharing space and challenge Norwegian students' ways of knowing or doing things as expressed further in the findings.

(De)coloniality – reflections challenging coloniality

Despite previous findings which show the asymmetrical power relations in student mobility facilitations between the Global North and South, mobility also provides a space to challenge colonial relations, such as critiquing the special treatment some of the Norwegian student teachers received in their practicum period.

Some think they should treat them as special, that is negative. Students are talked about as whites, but Zambians are talked about as teacher students. They are whites, but they are people, they are students. Why do Norwegians accept to be treated special? They accept that because they are from a privileged society, so colonialism must be perpetuated. Maybe some schools fear to accept white students because of that kind of situation, to buy special cups and tea for them. (Male 2, South)

The issue of asking for equal treatment was also shared by another facilitator from the Global South:

Although we have different cultures, coming from different regions and races, we are the same. We should respect each other. I try to tell the teachers and the students that people who are coming through this mobility, we are the same and they must be treated like how we treat each other. (Female 4, South)

It was clear that facilitators from the South were aware of the role whiteness and coloniality play, such as the special treatment given or expected by the Norwegian students and facilitators from the North. As hinted (by Male 2 above), some choose to strategically avoid these students to avoid the extra costs that might follow ('special cups and tea'). However, other facilitators used the opportunity to emphasise the importance of equal treatment regardless of people's backgrounds. These facilitators' arguments coincide with the decolonial perspective, as they seek to challenge and undo the legacy of colonialism still perpetuated through whiteness and Eurocentrism (Juul-Wiese & Adriansen, 2019).

It was also expressed that Norwegian students could lack cultural sensitivity and global awareness when they arrived in the Global South. 'One student came and said all is so cheap here and illustrated how they feel privileged and so, and compared oneself to many here, including me as a senior coordinator' (Male 2, South). The same participant raised his voice and asked, 'What do they come here for if they can't adjust to the environment and try to learn how we do things, they can't compare and

be like Norwegians while they are here.’ A similar thought was expressed by another facilitator from the South, who called for better preparation and more realistic expectations which she underlined, albeit slightly ironically, ‘If they expect to meet animals and mountains [reflecting tourists’ expectations], they will be disappointed because we offer teaching practice’ (Female 4, South).

The above statements convey the poor preparation of the Norwegian student teachers to critically meet global challenges and diversity. This was supported and reflected by some of the facilitators from Norway, as follows:

It is a matter of getting the students to look up, beyond the Norwegian context, as it is not very easy because teacher education is very much Norwegian-centred. In other words, they will become teachers in Norway, so it is somehow more interesting for them to learn about multiculturalism (through mobility) because they will experience it in the classroom, not because they are supposed to have awareness about other parts of the world and so on. This is a weakness, a weakness in the system. (Male 7, North)

This was supported by another facilitator from the North, who expressed the lack of a (de)colonial relations perspective in Norwegian teacher education and education in general.

‘Very few of my students have in-depth knowledge of colonialisation. And how colonialisation or coloniality still affects societies both in the North and South’ (Female 6, North).

These facilitators express the challenges of giving Norwegian student teachers and teacher education visions beyond Norwegian contexts. One of the major foci in mobility in Norway still seems to learn *about* the ‘others’ and not *from* the ‘others’. Such perspectives are facilitated by the nationalistic teacher-oriented education programmes as expressed by the participants. This makes it difficult for students to acquire border thinking or sensing skills (Mignolo, 2021) just by being abroad, if they have not learned to identify colonial relations and structures through their education systems. As one of the facilitators opined:

I think what’s important is that we as teacher educators have an understanding that it’s a process and understand where students are when they start. Because that’s the thing that we must take them through, especially in those bigger courses, is that we’re asking them to think in a different way. To ask them to read a book and then think that it makes them think in a different way, that’s pretty naïve. But then also, in a way that is a process, and I also believe these things must be embodied. I don’t think half a year is a long process, but at least it’s a process. (Female 6, North)

The above reflections concur with decolonial scholars’ cautions, that challenging and transforming the CMP is complex. As expressed by Mignolo (2011), decoloniality is not a static condition. Instead, decoloniality seeks to continually make visible, open up and advance radically distinct perspectives and positionalities that displace

Western rationality as the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis and thought. Although limited, we see the opportunities that mobility provides in interrogating Norwegian teacher education rationality.

Despite the challenges described in our findings, the participants were largely positive about student mobility as an important aspect in the process of developing global awareness and internationalisation. This was grounded on the necessity of learning from each other and avoiding isolation. However, partners from the Global South expressed the limitations they experienced in mobility projects, such as the freedom to choose partner countries and institutions, the capacity to send their students abroad given these countries' poor economy and the conditions set by their partners in the Global North. As a result, they mainly accommodated students from the Global North despite their desire to also facilitate mobility with countries in the region:

Yes ... we look at it as an important aspect, because we are now in a global village. *We can no longer afford to be in isolation.* We need to know what others are doing; others also need to know what we are doing and learn from each other. We have had plans at college so that we would also collaborate with colleges in the SADC (Southern African Development Community region). But the only stumbling block has been the finances, especially that our economy is not doing fine... Otherwise we have plans that we not just collaborate with colleagues from Europe, but also the SADC region. (Male 1, South)

'Like the way it is now, we just received the students here... But if there will be any chance or whatever, I think it will be more okay if some from Zambia visit Norway' (Female 3, South).

These comments correspond with previous studies that show that while interest in gaining global educational experiences remains strong, the needs and profiles of students' mobility continue to change due to various economic and political reasons (Choudaha, 2017). Internationalisation and student mobility are always communicated as desired gateways to global understanding and social justice. However, as also observed by Blithe and Lima de Carvalho (2023) in their study about decolonising internationalisation initiatives, internationalisation policies are highly political communicative acts, which sort and reproduce systems of oppression and dominance globally. They, among others, as Mbembe (2016) pointed out, rely on the English language and mobility as among the aspects that still favour the Global North and call for internationalisation programmes that are more equitable and attainable across the globe.

Concluding reflections

This study explores (de)colonial perspectives among facilitators of teachers' student mobility from Norway to Zambia and Tanzania. Using decolonial lenses requires knowledge and the theoretical tools to identify, acknowledge, unentangle and challenge

the invisibility of colonial legacies and relations. Additionally, it requires decolonial attitudes, which is about responsibility and the willingness to take diverse perspectives (Maldonado-Torres, 2016; Mbembe, 2022) and empowering those whose perspectives are marginalised or placed on the periphery (Freire, 2000; Mignolo, 2021). Despite the claimed benefits of mobility, such as mutual learning, cultural sensitivity and intercultural understanding, it is evident that colonial power relations still hinder the full utilisation of such potential and social justice between the North and South in educational co-operation such as student mobility. In our study, this is revealed based on the ways the Global South participants occupy subordinate positions and marginal responsibilities in the mobility process. This demonstrates that, it is still the North/Norwegian partners' political agenda that dominates the mobility premises, such as the selection of partners the financing and organisation of mobility activities.

It is also alarming that decolonial concepts and theorisation could run the danger of reproducing the Western epistemologies that they claim to deconstruct (Andreotti et al., 2015). Although the narratives from respondents in the Global South express epistemic injustice, they rarely use the decolonial concept. Based on our findings and those of previous decolonial scholars, it is important to consider, when speaking about Africa–Western relations, the dialectics of 'tradition' and 'modernity' relations from both parts and avoid essentialising an elusive, subordinate, underdeveloped Africa (Mudimbe, 1988, in Staeger, 2016, p. 189). As stated by Mbembe (2022), the decolonial approach is not meant to completely replace the Western or colonial master legacy but rather to acknowledge, decentre and contextualise other ways of seeing and knowledge. We find student mobility in our study to be an important (de) colonial contested terrain that allows the exercise of decolonial attitudes and epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2011) to decentre the colonial legacy in the internationalisation of education.

As stated by Mbembe (2022), decolonialisation is not the end point but rather the beginning of an entirely new struggle over what ought to be taught or learned. To better understand the mechanism behind this, more scrutiny at the structural and policy levels is necessary to examine the ways in which the social (in)justice expressed by the mobility facilitators in our studies are connected or reproduced at the structural level. This can create a better understanding of the connection between individuals, institutions and policies that reproduce colonial power relations in education, nationally and globally, and the ways to deconstruct those power relations.

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